

In the Claims:

1. Canceled.
2. (Currently Amended) The probe needle according to claim [[1]] 6 wherein the elongated member includes a fixed end and a free end and wherein the contact member is attached at the free end.
3. (Currently Amended) The probe needle according to claim [[1]] 6 wherein the entire surface of the contact tip is provided with the coating.
4. (Original) The probe needle according to claim 3 wherein the entire surface of the probe needle is provided with the coating.
5. Canceled.
6. (Currently Amended) A The probe needle according to claim 5 for testing semiconductor chips, the probe needle comprising:  
an elongated member; and  
a contact tip attached at one end of the elongated member, wherein at least a portion of the surface of the contact tip is provided with a coating of a chemically inert, electrically conductive material that is hard relative to the material of surfaces of the semiconductor chips to be contacted, the coating comprising titanium; and further comprising

an adhesive layer of titanium arranged beneath the titanium nitride layer so that the adhesive layer is between the surface of the contact tip and the titanium nitride layer.

7. Canceled.

8. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim ~~[[7]]~~ 10 wherein the coating the probe needle at least in the area of the contact tip comprises completely coating the probe needle.

9. Canceled.

10. (Currently Amended) ~~A The method according to claim 9 for manufacturing a probe needle for testing semiconductor chips, the method comprising:~~

providing a probe needle that includes a contact tip;

coating the probe needle at least in the area of the contact tip with a chemically inert, electrically conductive material that is hard relative to the material of the contact surfaces of the semiconductor chips to be contacted, wherein the coating comprise coating with titanium nitride;  
and ~~further comprising~~

coating at least in the area of the contact tip with a titanium layer prior to the coating with titanium nitride.

11. (Original) The method according to claim 10 wherein the coating with titanium and titanium nitride takes place in situ.

12. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim [[9]] 10 wherein the probe needle is coated with titanium using a physical vapor deposition (PVD) method.

13. (Original) The method according to claim 12 wherein the PVD method comprises a reactive magnetron sputtering method.

14. (Original) The method according to claim 12 wherein the coating takes place from a titanium target with the addition of the reactive gases argon and nitrogen.

15. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim [[9]] 10 wherein the titanium nitride comprises titanium nitride with a stoichiometric ratio of Ti:N = 1.

16-17. Canceled.

18. (Currently Amended) A The method of claim 17 forming a semiconductor device, the method comprising:

fabricating a semiconductor wafer to include a number of circuits and a number of pads;

contacting a test probe to at least one of the pads, the test probe including a contact tip that is coated with a chemically inert, electrically conductive material that is hard relative to the at least one pad, wherein the test probe includes a contact tip that is coated with a layer of titanium and a layer of titanium nitride overlying the layer of titanium; and

performing an electrical test by applying a test signal to the semiconductor wafer through the test probe.

19. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~[[17]]~~ 18 and further comprising, after performing an electrical test, packaging the semiconductor device.

20. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~[[16]]~~ 18 wherein the step of contacting a test probe is performed on an individual semiconductor chip.